

When it comes to local cuisine, Indonesia is probably best known for nasi goreng and mie goreng, the ubiquitous bowls of fried rice or noodles. But for restaurant owner Michael Sembada, the real deal is *nasi campur*, a meal found across the archipelago in a huge variety of styles.

“Nasi campur” basically means “mixed rice,” so you can expect to find a mix of side dishes arranged around a hefty helping of rice, from boiled eggs to beans to crunchy slices of tempeh. Michael wanted to share his family recipes for this classic dish, so he established the nasi campur haven Koko Bogana in Kebayoran Baru.

“I love making food and I also love to mix foods, so that’s why I like nasi campur,” Michael said. “Also, I want to expose the younger generation to real Indonesian food because a lot of them are not aware of what real traditional Indonesian food is.”

Michael grew up in Cirebon, West Java, in a family that loved to cook. Koko Bogana is a tribute to the dishes of his childhood and its variations across Indonesia.

Starting out as a garage restaurant in Cikagang, South Jakarta, Koko Bogana is now a well frequented establishment on the busy Jalan Cipaku in Kebayoran Baru.

Entering the restaurant, visitors are greeted with abundant greenery and a calming water feature, set among an interior of dark wood. Indonesian music from the 1960s and ‘70s brings an instant sense of nostalgia, setting the tone for the culinary trip down memory lane.

Mix and match

There are 11 types of nasi campur on the menu at Koko Bogana, each taking elements from regional cuisines and served on banana leaves for an authentic touch.

The signature dish is nasi *bogana*, a Javanese version

Get In The Mix

PHOTOS DISSY EKAPRAMUDITA

Koko Bogana celebrates one of Indonesia’s favorite dishes, the humble *nasi campur*.





made with minced beef, shredded chicken, tempeh and a spicy sambal. The word “bogana” means “mine” in Javanese, so the dish is literally “my rice.” The same formula is applied to the names of the other dishes, like the Sundanese *nasi kuring*, made with lemongrass, chicken, tempeh and shrimp.

From Michael’s hometown there is *nasi pagongan*, served with dried coconut, potato crisps for a nice crunch, sweet beef and a boiled egg. But the standout element of this dish is the rice, which is infused with spinach. The color doesn’t quite reach a nuclear green color, but the flavor of the spinach really comes through.

For all the regional dishes, Michael sticks to the basics, but doesn’t forget to add his own touch of flair.

“I didn’t create all of the dishes, but I did modify them,” he said.

To keep the menu fresh, Koko Bogana offers a special dish of the day. Customers can help themselves to a selection of ingredients from a certain region, served on banana leaves in clay pots at a small station.

On Monday and Thursday there is *nasi gudeg* from Central Java, made with jackfruit curry, while on Tuesday and Friday there is *nasi sanglah* from Bali, with squid, chicken and bean sprouts. Wednesday and Saturday feature *nasi liwet* from Solo, made with rice cooked in coconut milk and chicken broth.

Thursday is the day to ask for *nasi tarutung*, a dish from North Sumatra featuring a special chili sauce called *sambal andaliman*, the perfect accompaniment for the traditional sour fish curry, dried and salted anchovies with peanuts, sour papaya leaves and salted beef.

Apart from nasi campur, Koko Bogana also offers other traditional Indonesian foods including *taoge siram*, a noodle dish originally from Bogor that has a nice balance in textures provided by the added *oncom*, a fermented soy bean



“I always bring my foreign friends here because you can’t get any more Indonesian than this.”

Ima Abdulrahim, regular customer

THE BUZZ ON KOKO BOGANA



Recommended dishes/drinks

Nasi tarutung (only on Thursdays), kopi with condensed milk



Prices

Food Rp 19,000 to Rp 47,500
Drinks Rp 1,500 to Rp 25,000



Address

Jl. Cipaku 1, No. 2, Kebayoran Baru



Open

Monday to Saturday 9 am to 6 pm
Sunday open only for special orders



product similar to tempeh but with a spicier, saltier flavor and a pasty consistency.

All the extras

While the salt and spice is mainly left on the savory dishes, when it comes to sweets Koko Bogana also offers Indonesian desserts galore.

The desserts vary every day and are made fresh. The specialty is *jajanan pasar* — assorted traditional Indonesian cakes served on banana leaves in a woven basket.

The family favorite on the menu is Michael’s grandmother’s *bubur lolos*, a sticky dessert made with rice, coconut and brown sugar.

For drinks, the standout here is the coffee. Even for someone who’s not a big coffee drinker, the Cirebon-style unfiltered coffee served in a wooden cup, saucer and lid really hit the spot for me.

There is a knack to drinking this unfiltered coffee, Michael said. The sugar, creamer or condensed milk should be stirred only once. After that, the coffee should be covered with a lid and left to sit for a couple minutes before drinking.

The reason for the one-stir rule is that it allows the coffee ground to settle into a muddy paste at the bottom of the cup, leaving the drink grinds-free.

Traditional coffee requires

patience, and Koko Bogana provides the right kind of atmosphere for a slowly brewed cup.

On the walls are artworks sourced from all over Indonesia, while courtyard gamelan players add to the authentic feel. Most nights, the restaurant is chatty with regulars enjoying favorite dishes both old and new.

Ima Abdulrahim, a regular customer who has been frequenting Koko Bogana for years, said she believes the restaurant is truly Indonesian.

“I always bring my foreign friends here because you can’t get any more Indonesian than this,” she says.

Koko Bogana closes at exactly 6 pm every day, because any food that isn’t sold is given to charity.

Michael is modest and doesn’t like the fact well known, but every day he sends the unsold food by courier to orphanages, retirement homes and homes for people with disabilities. The reason the restaurant closes at 6 pm is so that those receiving the food are able to eat at a reasonable hour.

For visitors, Koko Bogana is a place not to be missed. The staff is friendly, the atmosphere relaxed and the food is truly satisfying.

Jassmyn Goh